

## Learning How to Use Data to Drive Instruction from Field Experts

A school can be a warehouse of data. Teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collect various types of data to make informed decisions on screening students for placement, using progress monitoring or formative assessments to determine curricular changes, and interpreting annual performance data to identify areas of weakness for future educational focus.

It is important that our private schools apply the same concepts towards Islamic curricula. Often within our Islamic day schools, data is collected but never used. To increase achievement, it is imperative that data be organized for analysis and used to guide a range of decisions to help improve the success of students and schools.

Several methods of data collection are often used within a school including, teacher made quizzes and tests, observation, student portfolios, conference logs, surveys and feed back. For many public schools across the nation, one of the most common ways of collecting data is through the use of Standardized tests.

Though standardized tests can not gage the culture and climate of a school or the motivation of a student they do however, establish stronger accountability measures for education. In addition, standardized tests allow for the collection, interpretation, and use of student data. For decades public schools have used the data collected from standardized tests to:

1. Evaluate curriculum effectiveness
2. Evaluate student achievement
3. Track student achievement over time
4. Ensure the transferability of students between schools
5. Evaluate instructional methods and best practice

Formal assessments such as these help standardize our Islamic curriculum at a national level. In addition formative assessments collected in classrooms give teachers feedback about students' understanding of the material presented and what minor adjustments to their instruction may be needed to improve students' understanding.

Such assessments can be used as a screening system at the beginning and middle of the school year to help identify students who are academically on-track and those who are at-risk for difficulties in key critical content areas, such as Qur'anic studies. Data from these tests will help identify at-risk students who should receive research-based interventions. Schools should then use progress monitoring data (collected on a frequent basis) to gauge the students' progress (or response to an intervention) towards critical academic outcomes (Tilly, 2008).

Since schools can be overwhelmed with the amount of data collected it can be difficult to decide where and how data should be utilized. Organizing data makes it easier to understand. Data should be broken down at a district level, school level and classroom level. Eventually the use of data can ultimately help an institution prove that it is meeting and exceeding standards and expectations. Often schools will use this data to help identify their institution's quality of education.

To help Islamic school educators build their knowledge on utilizing data to drive instruction, I would like to invite Dr. Denis Jarvinen, owner and president of Strategic Measurement and Evaluation. An award winning educator, Dr. Jarvinen earned his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology specializing in Measurement and Evaluation. Dr. Jarvinen has over twenty years of practical experience managing the development of assessment material and analyzing data. Dr. Jarvinen is a recognized authority on facilitating test development and utilizing expert statistical analysis of data.

This session is intended to be a practical learning experience for the educators present with a question and answer session preceding Mine and Dr. Jarvinen's presentation.

**Topics discussed will include:**

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of implementing standardized testing for data collection?
2. What are the components of quality data?
3. How can data systems be setup to help organize, collect and interrupt student outcomes at multiple levels?
4. How can teachers and principals be trained to interrupt and use data to change instruction?
5. How to identify students at-risk for difficulties with certain subjects, such as Qur'anic studies and ways to track the progress of students receiving intervention services towards critical academic outcomes?
6. How can data help make decisions about individuals?
7. How to link data to teaching?
8. How can data be used for school accreditation?
9. How can data be used by parents?
10. Are there any benefits in using data at a National level (establishing norms)?